DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 504 RC 018 049

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TITLE On My Own: Mexican American Women, Self-Sufficiency, and the Family Support Act.
INSTITUTION National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.; Rockefeller Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE Dec 90
NOTE 63p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Community Coordination; Community Programs; Day Care; Discussion Groups; Economic Status; *Employment Problems; *Ethnic Stereotypes; *Federal Programs; Job Training; *Mexican Americans; *Mother Attitudes; *Mothers; Opinions; Transportation; Welfare Recipients
IDENTIFIERS Focus Groups Approach

ABSTRACT

The Focus Study, conducted by the National Council of La Raza's Poverty Project, used structured discussions by focus groups to examine Mexican American women's opinions, needs, and attitudes as they relate to the implementation of the 1988 Family Support Act (FSA). FSA's primary objective is to move people off welfare through education, training, and employment. The purpose of the first-year focus groups was to identify subject areas to be explored in the second year. The project staff conducted eight focus groups in four communities: Phoenix, Arizona; Mora, New Mexico; Pharr, Texas; and Kansas City, Missouri. In each community, the Focus Study collaborated with a staff person from a Hispanic community-based organization. Focus group participants were 57 Mexican American mothers under the age of 21. The following findings challenge some common perceptions about young Mexican American women: (1) they believed they could improve their economic status and were actively working to do so; (2) they showed a high level of initiative and resistance to dependence on welfare, whether they used welfare or not; (3) they saw lack of jobs, lack of access to good jobs, lack of high quality child care, and lack of transportation as barriers to economic security; (4) they expressed serious concerns about the quality and safety of center-based child care, and a preference for child care provided by relatives; and (5) they showed resistance to traditional cponcepts of marriage. Community profiles, a participant profile, an overview of the Family Support Act, a first-year discussion guide, and a first-year background questionnaire are appended. (KS)

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On My Own

Mexican American Women, Self-Sufficiency, and the Family Support Act

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- Capacity-building assista[illegible] .engthen Hispanic community-based organiz[illegible];
- Applied research, public policy a[illegible], and advocacy on behalf of the entire Hispanic community, designed to influence public policies and programs so that they equitably address Hispanic needs;
- Public information efforts to provide accurate information and positive images of Hispanics in the mainstream and Hispanic media;
- Special catalytic efforts which use the NCLR structure and credibility to create other entities or projects important to the Hispanic community, including international projects consistent with NCLR's mission.

NCLR is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has program offices in Los Angeles, California; Phoenix, Arizona; and McAllen, Texas.

The Poverty Project

The Poverty Project serves as NCLR's base for information and advocacy regarding Hispanic poverty in the U.S. The Poverty Project develops research and policy analysis reports; conducts legislative advocacy; provides policy analysis training to local affiliates; and disseminates information to Congress, the media, and national and local organizations and the public sector.

The Focus Study

Funding for the Focus Study was provided by the Ford Foundation. Additional funding for the completion of this report was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, through its support of the Poverty Project. The views and opinions expressed in this report are the authors' and NCLR's and do not neces[illegible]arily reflect those of any NCLR funders.

Cover Photograph: **George Rodriguez Photography**
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ON MY OWN: MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN, SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND THE FAMILY SUPPORT ACT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the following people for helping us with this report:

Mark Greenberg (Center for Law and Social Policy) who reviewed early drafts and generously shared his vast knowledge and expertise;

Linda LaScola (LaScola Qualitative Research) who helped us develop the Focus Study's methodology and provided personal assistance and encouragement throughout;

Jose Cruz (National Puerto Rican Coalition), Luis Duany (Children's Defense Fund), John Lanigan (Ford Foundation), Emily Gantz McKay (NCLR), and Demetra Nightengale (Urban Institute) who gave us careful, insightful reviews of this report's draft;

Gloria Bonilla-Santiago (Rutgers University Graduate School of Social Work), Cushing Dolbeare (National Coalition for the Homeless), Pamela Holcomb (Urban Institute), Katherine McFate (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies), Katherine Porter and Isaac Shapiro (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities), and Susan Rees and Carolyn Eberle (Coalition on Human Needs) who provided comments and ideas during a "work-in-progress" meeting in June 1990;

Carlyle Maw (NCLR) for his advice regarding the report's statistics;

Larry Wieland (Valle del Sol Family Services Center) and Lisa Gonzales (Chicanos Por La Causa Via de Amistad); Yvonne Montoya and Gloria Martinez (HELP); Sharon Waggoner (Las Vegas G.R.A.D.S program); Frank Vasquez and Esmeralda Alamia (Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation); Cris Medina and Diane Rojas (Guadalupe Center); and

All the young women who impressed us with their strength, intelligence, honesty, and humor: we hope we've done you justice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report describes the first-year methodology and findings of the National Council of La Raza's (NCLR) Focus Study. The Focus Study, conducted by NCLR's Poverty Project, uses structured discussions known as "focus groups" to examine Mexican American women's opinions, needs, and attitudes as they relate to implementation of the 1988 Family Support Act (FSA).

The Family Support Act

FSA's primary objective is to move people off welfare through education, training, and employment. One central feature of FSA is the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. Under FSA, each state must establish its own JOBS program and provide supportive services such as child care and transportation, as well as transitional services such as child care and Medicaid for women leaving welfare for employment.

Methods

The primary purpose of the first-year focus groups was to identify subject areas to be explored in the second year. Between March and June 1990, project staff conducted eight focus groups in four communities: Phoenix, Arizona; Mora, New Mexico; Pharr, Texas; and Kansas City, Missouri. In each community, the Focus Study collaborated with a Hispanic community-based organization which designated a staff person to serve as the local Community Coordinator. Community Coordinators recruited participants from low-income neighborhoods. In the first year, focus group participants were all Mexican American mothers under age 21. The first year included focus groups with women who receive AFDC and women who do not.

Findings

The first-year focus group findings appear to challenge some widely-held perceptions that helped shape FSA. These findings may also challenge some common perceptions about young Mexican American women. This report highlights 5 comparisons which best illustrate the difference between these common perceptions and what the focus group discussions revealed. This study found that the women in these focus groups:

1) **Believed they could improve their economic status and were actively working to do so;**

2) **Showed a high level of initiative and resistance to dependence on welfare, whether they used welfare or not;**

3) **Emphasized the following barriers to economic security: lack of jobs, lack of access to good jobs, lack of high quality child care; and lack of transportation;**

4) **Expressed serious concerns about the quality and safety of center-based child care, and a preference for child care provided by relatives;**

5) **Showed resistance to traditional concepts of marriage.**

Community Coordinators

The Hispanic community-based organizations involved with this study had suggestions and expertise that could be useful for FSA implementation. With one exception, these organizations had little or no knowledge of FSA.

Discussion

This report includes a discussion of the first-year findings, compares them to other research findings, and suggests some of the implications they have for FSA implementation. This discussion is organized into five areas:

1) Aspirations and Expectations. These findings may suggest that quality training, rather than programs focused on behavior or attitude modification, are the highest priority for woman such as those in this study. These findings may also suggest that effective programs for these Mexican American women must be tailored to their individual plans and interests. Finally, these findings indicate that these women may respond more favorably to a voluntary, rather than a mandatory, welfare-to-work program.

2) Barriers to Employment. These women described both a lack of jobs and a lack of access to good jobs; "access" issues included training, education, discrimination, and language and legal status. These barriers may have implications for FSA implementation. For example, the prevalence of low-wage, low-benefit work may indicate that certain types of training are necessary for these women to get good jobs, or that training programs may not be effective unless linked with economic development. The language and legal status issues suggest that limited-English proficient persons and recent immigrants require unique programs and services.

3) Child Care. If a preference for child care provided by relatives exists among the women we interviewed, it could be interpreted in a number of ways. For example, these Mexican American women could have certain cultural traits that determine their selection of child care, and therefore would be unlikely to use center-based child care under any circumstances. Or, they may not be familiar with other types of child care; but if they were, would use it. Finally, these Mexican American women might prefer child care provided by relatives, but would use another form of child care if it were of a certain design.

4) Attitudes Toward Men and Marriage. These findings relate to FSA in at least two ways: first, these findings raise questions about how these Mexican American women will view FSA's new child support enforcement requirements. Second, these findings suggest that young Mexican American mothers may make ends meet by living with their parents, as opposed to getting married. However, as some of the women discussed, living with their parents -- even if their parents have low incomes -- may make them ineligible for AFDC.

5) Community Interaction. The effectiveness of community-based programs is supported by research. For example, a recent review of research on welfare and work concluded that "it may be wise for states to consider nonprofit community-based organizations as possible provided for education and job training services, rather than limiting the provision of educational services to traditional educational institutions."

The Second Year On the basis of the first year, the second-year Focus Study will more closely examine participants':

1) Attitudes toward, and experiences with, welfare, welfare-to-work programs, and other training;

2) Work experience and related employment issues;

3) Selection of child care.

FSA Questions

The first-year findings may be of special interest to policy makers responsible for FSA implementation. The following are nine policy questions that arose from the first-year findings:

1) **Will JOBS programs focus on basic or vocational skills training as opposed to attitude or behavior modification (e.g., parenting classes or job readiness training)?**

2) **How will JOBS programs address individual participants' plans, interests, and needs?**

3) **Will women who are not mandated to participate in JOBS, but choose to volunteer, have ready access to such programs?**

4) **Are JOBS programs designed to help participants secure jobs with sufficient pay, benefits, and mobility?**

5) **How will JOBS programs meet the needs of participants who have limited English proficiency?**

6) **Through what process will states explain and familiarize JOBS participants with child care options?**

7) **How will states ensure that participants have access to these child care options?**

8) **Do state standards of need allow low-income teen parents to receive AFDC while living with their low-income parents?**

9) **How will community-based organizations be involved in the FSA planning and implementation process?**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Family Support Act

In 1988, years of welfare reform debate culminated in the passage of the Family Support Act (FSA). FSA had one primary objective: to move people off welfare through education, training, and employment. To meet this objective, FSA mandated all states to establish employment and training programs for people who receive benefits from the Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program. FSA was based on the premise that AFDC recipients -- mostly women raising children alone -- can become successful members of the work force.

The JOBS Program

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program is one central feature of FSA. Under FSA, each state must establish its own JOBS program based on federal guidelines. States must also provide supportive services such as child care and transportation, as well as transitional services such as child care and Medicaid for women leaving AFDC for employment.[1]

FSA Implementation

Since FSA's passage, states have begun putting FSA's structure and processes in place. However, many questions remain as to how implementation will turn FSA's premise into reality. For example, what types of jobs are available for women leaving AFDC? Are current child care resources sufficient to meet the needs of these women? Do fiscally-strapped states have the resources needed to provide high quality training programs?

As these questions suggest, FSA implementation issues include more than welfare reform. FSA implementation intersects with trends such as growing poverty among working families, increased proportions of woman-maintained families, and shrinking public funds in economically-troubled regions. The Focus Study, conducted by the National Council of La Raza's (NCLR) Poverty Project, was prompted by the need to examine these issues, their relevance to FSA implementation, and their particular significance for Hispanic Americans.

The following report describes the methodology of the Focus Study's first year, highlights the key findings, compares these findings with other research, and describes the methodology and focus of the study's second year. This report also lists nine policy questions which the first-year study findings stimulate.

II. METHODS

The Focus Study

The Focus Study is a two-year, non-longitudinal qualitative research project using structured discussions known as "focus groups."[2] Through these focus groups, this study will examine the opinions, attitudes, and needs of Hispanic women, particularly as they relate to FSA implementation. This study will also assess the impact, if any, of FSA on the lives of these women. In addition to the focus groups, this study will include interviews with community service providers to discuss their perceptions and knowledge of FSA and the needs of Hispanic women.

Mexican Americans

This study will focus on Mexican Americans, the largest group of Hispanics in the United States;[3] a parallel study is in progress which focuses on Puerto Ricans, the second largest Hispanic group in the United States.[4]

The First Year

The primary purpose of the first-year focus groups was to identify subject areas to be explored in the second year. In the first year, focus group participants were all Mexican American mothers under age 21. The first year focused on young mothers because (1) FSA targets young mothers;[5] (2) a narrowed participant pool allows for more specific questions; and (3) local study coordinators had access to such women.

Study Sites

Between March and June 1990, project staff conducted 8 focus groups in 4 communities: Phoenix, Arizona; Mora, New Mexico; Pharr, Texas; and Kansas City, Missouri. (See "Appendix A, Community Profiles.") In each community, the Focus Study collaborated with a Hispanic community-based organization selected from NCLR's network; these organizations were selected on the basis of their geographic location, their expressed interest, and their capacity to successfully complete the study.

Community Coordinators

In each community, the Hispanic community-based organization designated a staff member to serve as the local Community Coordinator. Community Coordinators were responsible for participant recruitment, study logistics (e.g., securing a quiet room, refreshments, etc.), and transportation and other services for focus group participants.

Participant Recruitment

Community Coordinators recruited participants based on a uniform recruitment process developed by NCLR.[6] All the participants were recruited from low-income communities. In each community, one focus group was held with women receiving AFDC and one with women not

receiving AFDC.[7] This study included both AFDC recipients and non-AFDC recipients because AFDC use is relatively low among Mexican Americans as compared to other populations,[8] and because a comparison between the two groups would be valuable for the development of second-year subject areas.

Group Discussions Each focus group discussed six topics: formal and informal support systems, parenting, training and education, AFDC, welfare reform, and participants' future plans and aspirations. A "discussion guide" developed by NCLR shaped each discussion. (See "Appendix D: Discussion Guide.") To ensure continuity, Julie Quiroz moderated each focus group. To ensure confidentiality, each focus group included only Quiroz (as moderator), Regina Tosca (as recorder), and the participants.

Study Participants Fifty-seven women participated in the focus groups, with 3 to eleven participants in each group. Of these:

- All were of Mexican descent;
- Fifty-five (96%) were bilingual or spoke English as their first language;
- Forty-nine (86%) were between 17 and 20 years-old;
- Thirty-three (58%) had dropped out of high school or junior high; of those who dropped out, nineteen had completed a General Educational Development (GED) degree or were enrolled in GED classes; seventeen (30%) were currently in high school; 7 (12%) were high school graduates;
- Forty-three (75%) had never been married;
- Thirty-three (58%) had work experience;[9] forty-nine (86%) were not currently employed;
- Thirty-three (58%) had participated in employment training programs; of these, twenty-five had participated in community-based training programs. Twenty-four (42%) had never participated in an employment training program.

Appendix B of this report includes a statistical profile of the first-year focus group participants.

Study Limitations

The first-year findings have three types of limitations: general qualitative research limitations, unique focus group composition limitations, and limitations regarding the relation between this study and FSA implementation.

1) Limitations of Qualitative Research. Focus groups are a form of qualitative research used to develop insight, in-depth understanding of attitudes and behavior, and direction for planning or further research. Because of the small number of people interviewed and the non-random method of recruitment used, focus group findings cannot be evaluated quantitatively, nor generalized to the broad population.[10]

2) Limitations of Focus Group Composition. The following 5 focus group composition factors -- many of which will be addressed through second-year study modifications[11] -- should be given particular consideration in interpreting the first-year findings:

Ethnicity. All the focus group participants were of Mexican descent. Although Mexican Americans make up 62.6%[12] of the Hispanic population, these findings do not reflect the experiences of other Hispanic subgroups, such as Puerto Ricans, Cubans, or Central Americans.

Language. Only 2 of the participants were monolingual Spanish-speakers; both had recently immigrated from Mexico. Therefore, the first-year findings do not focus on language barriers or the experiences of recent immigrants.[13] In 1980, 26% of the Mexican American population was foreign-born.[14]

Employment Status. Because focus groups were conducted during daily business hours, working women may have been deterred from participating in this study. In 1988, 47% of young Hispanic women between the ages of 16 and 24 were employed.[15]

Training and Other Program Experience. In each of these communities, Community Coordinators recruited focus group participants from easily available sources, generally community-based programs. Therefore, a large proportion of the focus group participants had participated in some formal program. This was particularly true in the Phoenix AFDC group and the Pharr non-AFDC group: in the Phoenix AFDC group, 8 of the 9 participants were enrolled in a community-based training program; in the Pharr non-AFDC group, all the women attended an alternative teen parent high school.

3) Limitation of First-Year Findings' Relation to FSA Implementation. Two factors limit the direct relation between this study's findings and FSA implementation:

Participants were recruited from the community, not from the JOBS program. This study focuses on low-income Mexican American women's attitudes as they relate to FSA implementation. This study also focuses on whether these women have been affected by FSA, and if so, how.

First-year focus groups were held while states were still in the FSA implementation planning process. All focus group sites have been designated as JOBS areas. However, only New Mexico, which implemented JOBS in January 1990, had a JOBS program in operation prior to the first-year focus groups. Missouri implemented JOBS in July 1990; Arizona and Texas implemented JOBS in October 1990.[16]

III. FIRST-YEAR FINDINGS

Strong Opinions

During the first year of this study, discussions with the focus group participants addressed many topics of concern to policy makers responsible for FSA implementation. For example, these Mexican American women held strong opinions about issues such as economic self-sufficiency, work, and child care.

Perceptions Versus Findings

The first-year focus group findings appear to challenge some widely-held perceptions which helped shape the Family Support Act. These findings may also challenge some common perceptions about young Mexican American women.

In the following section, we have selected 5 comparisons which best illustrate the differences between these common perceptions and what the focus group discussions revealed. These comparisons address the following issues:

1) Individual aspirations and expectations;

2) Welfare Use;

3) Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency;

4) Day Care; and

5) Attitudes toward men and marriage.

Common Perception *Young people from low economic status backgrounds have low aspirations and expectations for the future.*

Finding ***Most of the young Mexican American women we interviewed believed they could improve their economic status and were actively working to do so.***

AFDC Groups

In Phoenix, Pharr, and Kansas City, the women using AFDC had high aspirations (desires for the future), and often specific expectations (realistic intentions), such as going to college, becoming a nurse, or owning their own home. These aspirations and expectations contrasted dramatically with what we knew of their background[17] and their own descriptions of their social and economic status: for example, in Phoenix, women described the poor quality and danger of the public schools they attended; in Pharr and Kansas City, women spoke of a lack of decent jobs.

> *I want to go to college. My Mom and boyfriend tell me, "You won't finish." But, I'm going to go to college and I will finish. I've learned to ignore that.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

The Mora AFDC group was the only exception. In Mora, the social and economic status of the women in the AFDC group appeared to have influenced both their aspirations and expectations: these women described persistently high unemployment in their region -- and low personal expectations or aspirations.

Non-AFDC Groups

In Phoenix and Pharr, non-AFDC group discussions paralleled those of the AFDC groups: women held high aspirations and expectations despite acknowledged social and economic adversity. These high aspirations and expectations were also present in the Mora non-AFDC group, although they had not been evident among their AFDC counterparts. In the Mora non-AFDC group, most of the women were specific and enthusiastic about their future plans.[18]

> *I'd like to become an RN [registered nurse]. It depends how everything is going with my two babies. But, I will achieve my goal; I'm determined.* -- Mora, non-AFDC group

Phoenix was the only non-AFDC group where the women's aspirations and expectations mirrored their socioeconomic status. In this group, where the women were especially concerned with drug trafficking, racial and ethnic tension, and gangs in their neighborhoods, most considered it a luxury to plan beyond their immediate survival.

> *I don't have dreams. I've got reality to face, supporting my child, always worrying about money.* -- Phoenix, non-AFDC group

Common Perception	***Women who use welfare lack initiative.***
Finding	***The Mexican American women we interviewed showed a high level of initiative and resistance to dependence on AFDC, whether they used AFDC or not.***

A Temporary Phase

In Phoenix, Pharr, and Kansas City, most of the women using AFDC saw it as a temporary and unplanned phase of their lives, resulting from an unplanned pregnancy. Most of the women felt that a public assistance lifestyle fell far short of the expectations they had for themselves.

> *I don't want to be depending on the state. I don't want to be depending on no one. I just want to be depending on myself.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

The Mora AFDC group was the only exception: there, women did not express a strong desire to leave AFDC.

Long-Term Strategy

For some of the women in the AFDC groups, leaving the AFDC program was their immediate goal: they were anxious to get jobs and believed they could work their way up into better, higher-paying positions.

> *I can't wait to get off; it's embarrassing.* -- Pharr, AFDC group

Short-Term Strategy

Others felt that AFDC allowed them time to gain the skills and credentials that would enable them to enter the work force at a higher level. For them, well-paying, professional positions ensured that they would never need public assistance again.

> *When I get a job, it's going to be when I'm educated. I'm going to get a position where I'll never fall back on welfare.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

Pride

Women in the non-AFDC groups held similar views of public assistance. Some women described their fears of getting "hooked" on public assistance, or their pride in doing without it.

My whole family's been on [welfare] and I don't want that kind of life for my child, always depending on the state. I want her to know you've got to work for what you want. -- Phoenix, non-AFDC group

My mom went to college to get her degree while she was working and raising four kids. No one ever had to support her. -- Phoenix, non-AFDC group

Mixed Feelings

On the other hand, most of the women not using AFDC described technical or logistical reasons for their non-use, as opposed to attitudinal reasons.[19] For example, women in each of the non-AFDC groups explained that they were ineligible for AFDC because they lived with their parents, and their parents' income was higher than the state's "standard of need" (the income the state considers low enough to qualify a family for AFDC).[20] In Mora, women in both the AFDC and non-AFDC groups believed they were ineligible for AFDC if they were still involved with their baby's father. Many women -- particularly those in Phoenix -- also described frustration with AFDC's bureaucratic procedures. Women who had been cut off from AFDC -- or had applied and been denied -- were often resentful that the government would not offer them short-term help as they tried to better themselves through school or work.

Once they find out you're working, even five bucks an hour, they cut you off welfare. They should try to help people who help themselves. -- Kansas City, non-AFDC group

It would be good [to get AFDC], especially for us that are in school. I could see not getting it if we had dropped out of school or something. But we're trying to show them that we're doing something. -- Mora, non-AFDC group

AFDC Benefits

In every AFDC group, women described the difficulty of surviving on AFDC payments. There was unanimous support for higher AFDC benefits.

Welfare-to-Work

Women in every group were supportive of programs to provide training and supportive services to women on AFDC. None expressed suspicions or skepticism. Few were familiar with welfare-to-work programs or had heard of JOBS. In Mora City -- the only study site where JOBS had been implemented -- none of the women had heard of JOBS; none of the women using AFDC had been affected by it.

Common Perception ***Mexican American women's primary barriers to self-sufficiency are limited English proficiency, lack of work experience, and lack of training.***

Finding ***The women in this study emphasized the following barriers to economic security: (1) lack of jobs; (2) lack of access to good jobs; (3) lack of high quality child care; and (4) lack of transportation.***

Barriers

The women we spoke with experienced significant barriers despite the fact that (1) nearly all were monolingual English speakers or proficient in English;[21] (2) most had work experience; and (3) most had participated in some type of training.

Lack of Good Jobs

Lack of good jobs was the major concern of the women in Mora, Pharr, and Kansas City. In Mora, a town with an unemployment rate of 26.4%, women saw few jobs, and even fewer jobs for young people. In Pharr, we heard that the available jobs -- mostly part-time, low wage, no benefits -- did not provide an alternative to AFDC. In Kansas City, participants told us that most available positions were in fast food restaurants, which were generally part-time and paid minimum wage.

> *The only jobs available are part-time. They don't want to give you full-time so they don't have to give you benefits.* -- Kansas City, AFDC group

> *The types of jobs available don't pay enough to live on.* -- Pharr, non-AFDC group

Access to Good Jobs

In Phoenix, most of the women believed that good jobs existed, but that they were difficult to get because of their location or educational requirements. Several women described discriminatory hiring practices.

> *There are a lot of jobs out there but they want experience. That's why education is so important.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

> *Some places won't hire a Black or a Mexican because of your color.* -- Phoenix, non-AFDC group

Relevant Experience Needed

Women in every group discussed the difficulty of getting a job even after receiving training. Many of the women who had completed training programs had been told by employers that they would not be hired because they lacked relevant experience.

> *You can get trained, but when you go to get a job, they won't hire you without experience [in the skills in which you were trained]. But, how are you going to get experience if you don't work?* -- Pharr, non-AFDC group

Child Care

In every group, combining work and parent responsibilities was considered a major challenge.

> *I don't have nobody to take care of the baby after school. That's a problem. I would have to pay somebody, but I would only get minimum wage a few hours a week. So all the money I would make would go to child care.* -- Pharr, non-AFDC group

Transportation

In rural Mora and urban Phoenix, women felt that lack of transportation severely limited the places they could work, look for work, or attend training programs. Even when transportation -- such as buses -- was available, women with children often found it difficult to use.

> *I would have to commute to Santa Fe to find work.* -- Mora, non-AFDC group

> *Transportation would be real important, if they could help us with that. Something other than the bus, because when you have kids it's hard.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

> *Maybe they could help us obtain our own transportation, like a loan for a car.* -- Phoenix, Non-AFDC

Common Perception ***If center-based child care were available and affordable, low-income women would use it.***

Finding ***These Mexican American women expressed serious concerns about the quality and safety of center-based child care, and a preference for child care provided by relatives.***

Concerns About Child Care

In every group, women expressed concerns about center-based child care. These concerns ranged from child safety to lack of individual attention. Many women cited news stories about abuse in child care centers. These women also felt that center-based child care would not provide their children with attention from one person whom their children would trust.

> *You hear about all these things [in child care centers]. You don't know who to trust.* -- Phoenix, non-AFDC group

> *You don't know who to trust [for child care]. Relatives you can trust.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

Child Care Preferences

Women in every group expressed a preference for child care provided by their relatives.[22] This sentiment was strongest in the Pharr AFDC group, where half the women said they would not participate in a training program if it meant sending their children to center-based child care. Women in several of the groups -- particularly those in Phoenix -- supported policies for subsidizing child care provided by relatives; they felt that these subsidies would allow more women to choose child care provided by relatives, and would give the providers needed additional income.

> *I made my boyfriend's mother go out and become a [certified] day care mother because I was so worried about leaving them with someone. I bought everything for her. I stayed broke one month just to do it because I was so worried about the kids.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

> *The [certified day care mothers] are only allowed to take care of five children. They get more attention from one person; they get more bonded.* -- Mora, non-AFDC group

While this preference was strongly and widely voiced, many of the women showed a willingness to consider other forms of child care if it was familiar to them, met their standards, and allowed them to be close to their children. For example, in Mora, one woman took a job in a school-based child care program so she could watch her child while at work.

> *I would have to get to know the person [in a day care center] first.* -- Pharr, non-AFDC group

Common Perception	***Mexican American women are strongly influenced by traditional concepts of marriage.***
Finding	***Most of the women we spoke with expressed resistance to traditional concepts of marriage.***[23]

Marriage Equals Loss of Autonomy

With one exception, women in every group saw marriage and welfare in a similar light: both signified loss of independence. Remaining single allowed these women a certain autonomy which they viewed as one step toward economic independence. Many of the AFDC recipients saw the next step as supporting themselves without state assistance.

> *I like being single, being my own boss.* -- Mora, non-AFDC group
>
> *Now we can go to work. Before you just had to be a housewife and listen to what the man says.* -- Phoenix, non-AFDC group
>
> *I don't want to depend on him. Maybe later, when I can support myself and the baby, and could if he wasn't around.* -- Phoenix, AFDC group

Only the women in the Pharr AFDC group cited marriage as a important personal goal.[24]

Wariness of Men

In every group, women were skeptical of men's ability to accept responsibility. Many saw their male peers as financially and emotionally unprepared for fatherhood or relationships. Others were doubtful that men could be dependable, loyal partners.

> *My boyfriend's just out of prison. I told him, "This is your trial period. I want to see what you're going to do. If you mess up, that's it. I don't want to be with you."* -- Phoenix, AFDC group
>
> *There are no guys who are faithful.* -- Kansas City, AFDC group

IV. COMMUNITY COORDINATOR INTERVIEWS

In each of the study sites, project staff conducted interviews with the Community Coordinators and other staff of the Hispanic community-based organizations involved with the study. The following section highlights the central themes that emerged from those interviews.

Community Expertise

All the Community Coordinators felt they could provide state agencies with expertise that could help to structure effective programs. With one exception,[25] these organizations had little or no knowledge of FSA. Community Coordinators also felt that community-based organizations can help incorporate cultural and geographical nuances into programs.

> *You need programs that come out of the community, where [participants] feel safe and comfortable. The community should be researched to understand cultural distinctions and attitudes. They should find those people in the community who are respected and trusted and use them as channels of communication.* -- Frank Vasquez, Pharr Community Coordinator

Comprehensive Approaches

All the Community Coordinators discussed the need for programs with comprehensive approaches.

> *You need a holistic approach, instead of just Job Corps: "We'll send them to Job Corps and then they'll get a job." No way. You have to incorporate all aspects in order to make this change: job training, placement, case management, and cultural infusion -- a wholly integrated system that touches on all areas.* -- Larry Wieland, Phoenix Community Coordinator

> *[The state FSA planners] want to separate potential participants into different components. They want to send some to adult education, some to job search, and then others to OJT [On-the-Job Training]. There's no continuity; they just want to separate them.* -- Diane Rojas, Kansas City Community Coordinator

Realistic, Appropriate Programs

The Community Coordinators expressed concern about the implementation of programs that are ill-suited to their communities.

> *They put [AFDC recipients] on work search for six months. They come in here and have us sign cards saying that they were here looking for jobs -- but there's no work. It would be better if they had some kind of job creation or training instead of this work search.* -- Yvonne Montoya, Mora Community Coordinator

There was this great school program for teenage parents, but it was on the east side and no one wanted to go over there because they didn't feel comfortable in a Black neighborhood. -- Diane Rojas, Kansas City Community Coordinator

Problems in Current AFDC Programs

Community Coordinators were wary of current programs. They had concerns about client treatment and program policies, and were doubtful that new programs would be useful without proper community needs assessments.

[AFDC's] a big hassle. It's dehumanizing. The workers are rude. It's a zoo down there. They lose applications and status reports, so some of the women think it's not worth it. -- Diane Rojas, Kansas City Community Coordinator

There are a lot [of training programs] in the Valley. But, are they reaching their targets? I think they recruit those they can easily train. -- Frank Vasquez, Pharr Community Coordinator

FSA Planning

One of the Community Coordinators had participated in a community FSA briefing and forum organized by a state legislator. Based on what she had learned at the briefing, she was critical of some features of the state plan. For example, she discussed the state's proposed child care payments to non-certified providers:

That's crazy. We're advocating for quality care and they're going to make payments to unlicensed persons. That's going to jeopardize the kid's health and everything. They just want to get rid of the licensing. -- Diane Rojas, Kansas City Community Coordinator

V. DISCUSSION

The following section discusses the first-year focus group findings, compares them to other research findings, and suggests some of the implications they may have for FSA implementation. This section is organized into 5 subject areas:

1) Individual Expectations and aspirations;

2) Barriers to employment;

3) Child care;

4) Attitudes toward men and marriage; and

5) Community interaction.

1) Aspirations and Expectations

Optimism

The Mexican American women interviewed had high aspirations and expectations, and were optimistic about the benefits of training and welfare-to-work programs. Women using AFDC felt that higher AFDC benefits were needed.

Skepticism

Other research has also found high aspirations among Hispanics; however, these aspirations are not necessarily coupled with high expectations. For example, one study found a strong desire for training among Hispanics, but also a skepticism about the quality of training that would be provided.[26] Education research has also found that Hispanics tend to have high educational aspirations -- but low educational expectations.[27] The youthfulness of the participants could be one explanation for the consistency between these women's aspirations and their expectations.

Implications

The first-year findings may have significance with respect to FSA implementation. For example, these findings may suggest that quality training, rather than programs focused on behavior or attitude modification, are the highest priority for women such as the ones who participated in this study. These findings may also suggest that effective programs for these Mexican American women must be tailored to their individual plans and interests. Finally, these findings indicate that these women may respond more favorably to a voluntary, rather than a mandatory, welfare-to-work program.

2) Barriers to Employment

Lack of Good Jobs

The focus group participants' concerns with low-wage work are well-supported by research. In 1989, the poverty rate among working Hispanic single mothers was 38.5%;[28] Census Bureau data confirm that many Hispanic women are concentrated in the service occupations described by the focus group participants.[29] The lack of mobility of these jobs has also been documented. One recent study found that AFDC recipients who take low-wage jobs are unlikely to move up to higher-paid positions.[30] According to this study, less than one third of AFDC recipients who took jobs earning $5.30 per hour went on to higher-paid employment; nearly one half became unemployed or returned to AFDC when the job ended. A similar study in Texas -- where one of the Focus Study sites was located -- found that "the nature of the employment opportunities facing women on welfare [in Texas] -- typically low-wage, no-benefit jobs in high-turnover service and sales occupations -- will tend to result in repeat spells of [AFDC] receipt."[31]

Lack of Access to Good Jobs

Training. Although the focus group participants described difficulties in securing jobs following training, they nonetheless were eager to participate in training programs. Research has found that the effectiveness of training programs varies significantly.[32] Although little research on training program effectiveness has focused on Hispanics, a 1989 study of Hispanic participation in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs concluded that "the extent to which training programs contribute to increases in earnings depends upon the type of assistance participants receive, the duration of program services, and the quality of services provided."[33] This study also found that Hispanics' "wage rates at placement indicate that the type and quality of services provided do not qualify them for better-skilled, higher-wage jobs."[34]

Education. The first-year findings underscore the problems of poor education and low educational attainment among Mexican Americans and other Hispanic groups. As recent studies have shown, only 50% of young Mexican Americans aged 25-34 have completed four years or more of high school.[35]

Discrimination. First-year focus group participants -- particularly those in Phoenix -- were concerned with ethnic discrimination in hiring. Hispanics' experiences with discriminatory hiring practices have also been documented in research. For example, a recent study by the U.S. General Accounting Office found that Whites received 33% more job interviews and 52% more job offers than equally qualified Hispanics.[36]

Language and Legal Status. Fifty-five of the fifty-seven first-year focus group participants were monolingual English speakers or proficient in English; only two were not.[37] Although the responses of these two Spanish-speaking women were not the focus of this report, we were nonetheless struck by the difference between the content of their remarks and those of the other participants. For example, the Spanish-speakers felt that their undocumented status and lack of English proficiency were their primary barriers to employment.[38] Research has also found significant differences between the experiences of documented and undocumented Mexican Americans, and English- versus non-English-proficient Hispanics.[39]

Implications

Each of these barriers has implications for FSA implementation. For example, the prevalence of low-wage, low-benefit work may indicate that certain types of training are necessary for these women to get decent jobs, or that training programs may not be effective unless linked with economic development.[40] The language and legal status issues also suggest that recent immigrants require unique programs and services.

3) Child Care

Preferences

The Mexican American women who participated in the first-year focus groups appear to prefer child care provided by relatives rather than other types of child care. Very little research has focused on Hispanic child care arrangement patterns and preferences. However, according to data collected by the Census Bureau, Hispanics are more likely to use child care provided by relatives than are Blacks or Whites, and are less likely to use school or center-based child care.[41] A recent study of Massachusetts' welfare-to-work program ("ET") also found that Hispanic (primarily Puerto Rican) participants were less likely to choose formal child care arrangements than either Blacks or Whites.[42] Another recent study of Puerto Rican AFDC recipients found that 38% of Puerto Rican mothers, compared to 14% of Black mothers, believe that "kids would not learn as much in day care centers as at home." This same study found that 65% of the Puerto Rican mothers, compared to 28% of the Black mothers, believe that "kids lack enough attention at day care centers."[43]

Implications

If a preference for child care by relatives exists among the Mexican American women we interviewed, it could be interpreted in a number of ways. For example, these Mexican American women could have certain cultural traits that determine their selection of child care, and would therefore be unlikely to use center-based child care under any circumstances. Or, they may not be familiar with other types of child care; but if they were, would use it. Finally, these Mexican American women might prefer child care provided by relatives, but would use another form of child care if it were of a certain design (e.g., on-site child care while mothers are in training, child care from a Mexican American provider, etc.).

4) Attitudes Toward Men and Marriage

Mother-Only Families

Except for the Pharr AFDC group, first-year focus group participants did not view men and marriage as an appropriate or reliable source of economic security. These findings are particularly interesting in light of research which has found that getting married -- rather than finding work -- is the primary reason for women's exit from AFDC.[44] Although the present attitudes of these young women may not necessarily determine their future actions, these findings suggest that some young Mexican American women are resistant to forming two-parent families.

Implications

These findings relate to FSA implementation in at least two ways: first, these findings raise questions about how these Mexican American women will view FSA's new child support enforcement requirements.[45] Second, these findings suggest that young Mexican American mothers may make ends meet by living with their parents, as opposed to getting married. However, as some of the women discussed, living with their parents -- even if their parents have low incomes -- may make them ineligible for AFDC.

5) Community Interaction

Understanding Communities

Interviews with Community Coordinators suggest that understanding community needs and resources is helpful in designing effective programs. Community-based organizations are a good source of this information. However, with one exception, the Community Coordinators showed little knowledge of or involvement in FSA implementation. This lack of involvement may be explained by the fact that JOBS had not been fully implemented when the first-year focus groups were conducted, or perhaps, that the states had not conducted significant outreach to community-based organizations during the FSA planning process.

Program Effectiveness

The effectiveness of community-based programs is supported by research. For example, a recent review of research on welfare and work concluded that "it may be wise for states to consider nonprofit community-based organizations as possible providers for education and job training services, rather than limiting the provision of educational services to traditional educational institutions."[46] Another research and demonstration project recommended that policy makers seeking to improve the economic self-sufficiency of poor single mothers need to "foster organizations that are dedicated to job training and are experienced in serving disadvantaged individuals."[47] According to a recent study of Hispanics in employment and training programs, community-based organizations may also serve as a link between training and community economic and social development.[48]

VI. THE SECOND YEAR

Many questions and topics arose from the first-year focus groups. In the second year, this study will explore some of these questions and topics in greater detail. This study will also include several modifications.

Modifications

The second-year study will include the following modifications:

1) All focus group participants will be AFDC recipients;

2) Focus group participants will be of any age;

3) Community Coordinators will more actively recruit monolingual Spanish speakers; in Pharr and Mora, we plan to conduct one focus group in English and one in Spanish; and

4) Community Coordinators will more actively recruit women not involved in community-based programs. In Phoenix and Kansas City, we plan to conduct one focus group with women involved in community-based programs, and one with women not involved in community-based programs.

Discussion Guide

One the basis of the first-year findings, the second-year discussion guide will more closely examine participants':

1) Attitudes towards, and experiences with, welfare, welfare-to-work programs, and other training programs;

2) Work experience and related employment issues; and

3) Selection of child care.

VII. FSA IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONS

The findings described in this report may be of special interest to policy makers responsible for FSA implementation. For many states, development of a state JOBS program will be challenging given limited resources and substantial responsibilities. The following are some of the most significant questions that arose from the first-year study findings; these questions may be useful to state policy makers charged with turning FSA's premise into reality.

1) **Will JOBS programs focus on basic skill and vocational training as opposed to attitude or behavior modification (e.g. parenting classes or job readiness classes)?**

2) **How will JOBS programs address individual participants' plans, interests, and needs?**

3) **Will women who are not mandated to participate in JOBS, but choose to volunteer, have ready access to such programs?**

4) **Are JOBS programs designed to help participants secure jobs with sufficient pay, benefits, and mobility? For example, has the state conducted an assessment of where such jobs are located and what skills they require? Will the state require job placement contractors to meet performance standards based on the types of jobs participants secure?**

5) **How will JOBS programs meet the needs of participants who have limited-English proficiency?**

6) **Through what process will states explain and familiarize JOBS participants with child care options?**

7) **How will states ensure that participants have access to these child care options?**

8) **Do state AFDC eligibility tests allow teen parents to receive AFDC while living with their low-income parents?**

9) **How will community-based organizations be involved in the FSA planning and implementation process?**

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY PROFILES

Phoenix, Arizona

With a population of almost one million, Phoenix is the largest city in Arizona. Phoenix is located in Maricopa County which, together with Pima County, is home to 76% of the state's population. Major county industries include technology manufacturing, finance, retail, transportation, agriculture and personal services. An estimated 80% of the new jobs created in Arizona over the next decade will be in these two counties. Hispanics represent 16.4% of Arizona's population and are the state's largest minority.[49] In South Phoenix, where this study was conducted, Hispanics comprise roughly 40% of the population.[50]

Most jobs in South Phoenix are in the manufacturing and retail industries. In 1980, 52% of South Phoenix's women with children under 18 were employed. Almost 50% of South Phoenix residents had less than a high school education and 25% were living below the poverty level.[51]

Valle del Sol, the organization which coordinated the Focus Study in Phoenix, provides services including drug treatment and prevention services, family counseling, and educational resources. The organization's Family Services Center works with families at risk for child abuse and neglect. Counseling is provided to both individuals and families, either on-site or in the client's home. Parenting skills classes are offered to help prepare young parents to raise their children and cope with related stress.

Arizona began JOBS implementation on October 1, 1990, 6 months after the first-year focus groups. Arizona JOBS replaced Arizona Works, a work incentive program for AFDC recipients which promoted coordination of resources among social services, education, and employment/training agencies at the state and local levels. According to the Arizona Department of Economic Security, services provided under Arizona Works have been changed and enhanced under the JOBS program. Arizona JOBS will place more emphasis on case management and client input in training and employment decisions. Unlike Arizona Works, Arizona's JOBS program must provide child care to participants.[52] Arizona has also established general employment placement criteria for AFDC recipients: jobs that pay higher than minimum wage, provide opportunities for advancement, and offer adequate benefits.[53] At present, a complete JOBS program is available to single parents in Pima and Maricopa counties. By October 1991, additional JOBS sites will be established to provide minimal JOBS program services to 95% of the state's adult recipients.

In 1989, for a one-parent family of 3, Arizona's "need standard," the earnings the state considers necessary to to maintain a minimum standard of living, was $621; the maximum monthly AFDC payment for such as family was $293.[54]

Mora, New Mexico

Mora is a small town (population 1,500) in an area known as the "Appalachia of the Southwest." Mora is located in San Miguel County, a mountainous rural county in the northeastern New Mexico. Although San Miguel and neighboring Mora County comprise 25% of the state's land mass, they are home to only 12% of the state's population.[55] Eighty-six percent of Mora's population is Hispanic.[56]

State and city government-operated schools, courthouses, and parks provide the bulk of Mora's jobs.[57] County industries include ranching, farming, seasonal mining and small family-run businesses, such as restaurants, grocery stores, and gas stations. During the 1980s, plant closings in the mining industry contributed to the area's already high unemployment rate;[58] in 1989, Mora's unemployment rate averaged 26.4%.[59]

The beauty of the northern New Mexico landscape belies its poverty. In 1989, nearly 40% of Mora's inhabitants were poor.[60] In 1988, the median household income for San Miguel County was $12,879.[61]

The Home Education Livelihood Program (HELP), the Focus study's coordinating organization in Mora, provides area families with housing assistance including utility and rental payments, provision of food and commodities, and referrals to other assistance programs. HELP also provides area youth with employment training, GED classes, and a summer employment program.

New Mexico began implementing JOBS in January 1990, 3 months before the first-year focus groups. JOBS was implemented through Project FORWARD, the state's existing employment and training program for AFDC and Food Stamp recipients. Project FORWARD was designed to help recipients obtain education, job training, and work experience which would enable them to secure unsubsidized employment and reduce their dependency on state assistance. Project FORWARD is currently operating in twenty-three counties and will expand to be statewide by October 1991. New Mexico plans to involve 5,500 mandatory and voluntary participants in Project FORWARD; 31.2% of its current AFDC caseload. By September 30, 1990, New Mexico had anticipated placement of 3,218 people into some JOBS activity: 1,322 of those in education, and 1,126 in group or individual work search.[62]

In 1989, New Mexico's "need standard" was $264 for a one-parent family of 3. New Mexico's maximum monthly AFDC benefit payment equaled its "need standard."[63]

Pharr, Texas

Pharr (population 31,077) is located in Hidalgo County which, along with Cameron, Starr and Willacy Counties, comprise the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Eighty-eight percent of Pharr's residents are Hispanic, reflecting the fact that Pharr was once part of Mexico and is located about seven miles from the present U.S.- Mexico border. For Hidalgo County overall, 81.3% of the population is Hispanic.[64]

Hidalgo County's economy relies on its agriculture, tourism, electronic assembly, and machine manufacturing industries.[65] A freeze in 1989 disrupted crop production, driving an already high unemployment rate even higher to between 16% and 18%.[66]

Although Pharr is considered one of the Valley's urban centers, it is surrounded by remote, self-contained rural areas. Over 36% of county residents live below the poverty level,[67] many of them in "colonias," deeply impoverished unincorporated communities characterized by inadequate sewage facilities, contaminated water and, in some cases, lack of electricity.[68] Despite these conditions, only about 13% of the county's residents receive Medicaid, and only about 25% receive public assistance. Over 70% of county residents have no type of health insurance.[69] In 1988, the estimated median household income in Hidalgo County was $14,909.[70]

Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation (HCHCC) served as the coordinating organization for the Focus study's Pharr focus groups. HCHCC provides many Valley residents with comprehensive health care that would otherwise not be available to them. HCHCC serves almost 20,000 clients,[71] the majority of whom are poor and uninsured. HCHCC provides gynecological, dental, pharmaceutical and immunization services, and assists with hospital payments for migrant farm worker mothers and their infants.

Texas began implementing its JOBS program in October, 1990, 4 months after the first-year focus groups. Texas JOBS replaces REFOCUS, the state's earlier employment and training program. According to the Texas Department of Human Services, JOBS will put more emphasis on case management. Texas JOBS will operate in areas which account for 89% of the state's AFDC population; the state expects to serve 44,186 clients per month (roughly 8% of the state's AFDC caseload)[72] during the second year of operation. Texas plans to administer JOBS through Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs, Texas Independent School Districts, junior colleges, vocational schools, and Job Corps. Texas will make a special effort to serve 16 and 17 year-olds, who have been designated as a target population. This targeting was initiated with the belief that early intervention prevents future welfare dependence.[73]

In 1989, Texas calculated its "need standard" as $574 for a one-parent family of 3. However, the maximum monthly AFDC payment for such families was $184.[74]

Kansas City, Missouri

Kansas City (population 439,000)[75] is located at the juncture of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, making it an inland port. The city's major industries include frozen food storage, greeting card production, and farm equipment distribution. Other major city industries include automobile production and engineering.[76]

In 1988, Hispanics represented and 4% of the population in Kansas City.[77] Many Hispanics are concentrated in Mexican neighborhoods like the west side, community which is 65% Hispanic.[78]

The Guadalupe Center, the Focus study's coordinating organization in Kansas City, has been serving Kansas City's Mexican American community since 1919. Its programs include GED classes, child care, job placement, and elderly emergency assistance to the city's residents. The Center's Westside Teenage Pregnancy program also offers counseling, case management, and parenting education to Hispanic teenage mothers. The teenage pregnancy program's participants are 80% Hispanic; 70% of the women are unmarried.[79]

Missouri began implementing its JOBS program, called FUTURES, in July, 1990, 1 month after the first-year focus groups. Prior to FUTURES, Missouri had no statewide welfare-to-work program. Missouri JOBS will be administered through a number of existing systems such as JTPA programs, local schools, and community action agencies. Initially, Missouri JOBS was expected to serve 700 participants in its first month of operation and increase that number to between 1,800 and 3,200 participants per month in the second year. Participation is not mandated for AFDC recipients with children under 3.[80]

In 1989, Missouri calculated its "need standard" as $312 for a one-parent family of 3. By contrast, such a family's maximum monthly AFDC payment was $285.[81]

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Table 1 on the following page provides statistical information on the first-year focus participants. Some of the information was collected from the Background Questionnaire. Some was calculated from information provided during the focus group discussions.

TABLE 1. FIRST YEAR PARTICIPANT PROFILE

	PHOENIX		MORA		PHARR		KANSAS CITY			
JOBS PROGRAM ACTIVATED	October 1990		January 1990		October 1990		July 1990			
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	16		15		11		15			
	AFDC	NON-AFDC[a]	AFDC	NON-AFDC	AFDC	NON-AFDC	AFDC	NON-AFDC[b]	TOTALS	PERCENT
PARTICIPANTS (BY GROUP)	9	7	4	11	8	3	6	9	57	
MEAN AGE	19.5	18	18.5	17	19	17	18	19	19	
MARITAL STATUS										
Single	9	6	3	8	3	2	6	6	43	75.4%
Married		1		3	1	1		3	9	15.8%
Separated			1		4				5	8.8%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT										
In High School			2	9	2	3	1		17	29.8%
High School Graduate	2		1				2	2	7	12.3%
Dropout/non-GED	2	1	1	2	4		1	3	14	24.6%
In GED Program	5	5					2	2	14	24.6%
GED Completed		1			2			2	5	8.8%
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE										
CBO Program	8	7	4				3	3	25	43.9%
JTPA				5	1				6	10.5%
Other	1				1				2	3.5%
None				6	6	3	3	6	24	42.1%
DAY CARE USE										
Self Only			1	1			2	5	9	15.8%
Relative	3	4	3	8	7	2	4	2	33	57.9%
Relative Only[c]		4	3	8	7	1	3	2	28	49.1%
Combination Relative/Other[d]	3					1	1		5	8.8%
Other	6			2	1	1		1	11	19.3%
Day Care Center	2							1	3	5.3%
School				1	1	1			3	5.3%
Certified Family-Based Care				1					1	1.8%
CBO	4[e]								4	7.0%
LENGTH OF TIME ON AFDC	1 week - 3 Years		2 months - 3 Years		1 month - 5 Years		2 months - 2 Years			

[a] Complete day care information not available for the Phoenix Non-AFDC group.
[b] Complete day care information not available for the Missouri Non-AFDC group.
[c] Includes male partner and male partner's parents.
[d] Includes school-based care, uncertified family-based care, CBO-based care.
[e] Half of the women using CBO-based care were also using certified family-based care.

APPENDIX C: AN OVERVIEW OF THE FAMILY SUPPORT ACT

The Family Support Act (FSA) contains four central provisions:

1) Establishment of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program (JOBS);
2) Expansion of the Child Support Enforcement Program;
3) Mandated state assistance to families with an unemployed parent (the "AFDC-UP" program); and
4) Transitional services for AFDC recipients leaving welfare for work.

The following is a brief description of these provisions.

1. The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program (JOBS)

JOBS mandates states to require AFDC recipients to participate in education and employment training activities; however, education and employment training programs may not be available to all AFDC recipients. Prior to FSA, states were required to operative Work Incentive (WIN) programs. In the 1980s, state WIN programs involved primarily job search activities or work experience programs, and operated on a small federally-funded budget. The following are some key provisions of the JOBS program.

a. By October 1, 1990, each state must develop a State plan describing how the State intends to implement the program. States must also periodically update this plan.

b. States must have JOBS programs in operation by October 1990 and be operating statewide by October 1992.

c. By 1995, states must meet participation quotas of up to 20% of those required to participate; participants can be volunteer or be mandated to participate. When serving a target population (See below), states must give first consideration to those who volunteer for JOBS programs. When serving non-target populations, there is no "volunteers first" requirement.

d. States must provide supportive services such as child care, transportation and other work related expenses necessary for participation in an approved activity.

e. Those exempt from participation include: parents with children under age 3 or, at state option, under age 1; parents who are ill or incapacitated or caring for an ill or incapacitated person at home; women in advanced stages of

pregnancy; and parents who are either attending school full-time or working more than thirty hours per week.

f. States must identify and provide education for individuals with limited English proficiency. However, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has determined that states can decide that English language "instruction is not necessary for the participant to achieve self-sufficiency."

g. States may approve continuation of a self-initiated activity (i.e., an individual is in good standing in a post-secondary institution or vocational or technical training). This self-initiated activity can count toward the state's JOBS participation rate, but no federal JOBS funds may be used to meet the costs of the education or training. If the self-initiated activity is counted as a JOBS activity, the state must provide child care, transportation, and supportive services. States can also decide, upon review of an individual's employability plan, that she/he must accept employment, rather than continue in the self-initiated activity.

h. In order for states to receive maximum federal reimbursement under JOBS, they must expend 55% of JOBS funds on the following target populations:

- AFDC applicants and recipients who have received AFDC in 36 of the preceding 60 months;
- Custodial parents under age 24 who have not completed high school or have little or no work experience in the previous year; and
- Individuals who are members of an AFDC family in which the youngest child is within 2 years of being ineligible.

i. Parents under age 20 who have not completed high school or its equivalent may be required to attend educational activities regardless of the age of their youngest child; they may also be required to participate in educational activities on a full-time basis. Parents who are age 18 or 19 may be placed in a work, rather than educational, activity, if they are not making good progress and their participation in educational activities is not necessary for employment goals.

2. The Child Support Enforcement Program

Under FSA, states will be subject to financial penalties if they do not meet progressively higher child support enforcement performance standards. FSA's changes were intended to improve the Child Support Enforcement program's effectiveness in providing financial support for children. FSA's changes include:

a. All states must have procedures to require genetic testing in all contested paternity cases;

b. With some exceptions, states must institute immediate wage withholding from the absent parent in all new child support orders after January 1, 1994.

c. All states must meet federal standards regarding the length of time a state may take to respond to requests for paternity establishment in child support enforcement cases.

3. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children Unemployed Parent Program (AFDC-UP).

The AFDC-UP program provides cash assistance to needy two-parent families with an unemployed primary earner. Under FSA, states must have an AFDC-UP program in operation by October 1990. Prior to FSA, states were not mandated to operate AFDC-UP programs. As of 1989, twenty-two states did not have AFDC-UP programs.

4. Transitional Services

FSA requires time-limited transitional child care to individuals who lose AFDC eligibility due to employment; FSA also extended the provision of transitional Medicaid from four months to one year. FSA requires:

a. One year of transitional child care which requires co-payments by former recipients based on a sliding fee scale established by the state.

b. One year of transitional Medicaid, in which premiums can be charged in the second six months if family income is greater than 100% of the poverty line.

APPENDIX D:
FIRST-YEAR DISCUSSION GUIDE

The following "discussion guide" was used in all the first-year focus groups. The same discussion guide was used for both the AFDC and non-AFDC groups. For the AFDC groups, Question #6 focused on their experience with AFDC; for the non-AFDC groups, Question #6 focused on their impressions of AFDC.

This discussion guide served as a general reference for the moderator; however, in each focus group, she frequently modified the wording, questions, or structure to fit the discussion. For example, in every focus group, participants voiced opinions about men, even though it was not an issue that had been part of the discussion guide. The moderator therefore asked questions about that issue.

I. Introduction (15 minutes)

Good morning (afternoon) and thank you for coming. I'd like to start this session by introducing myself. My name is Julie and this is Regina. She will be my assistant for this session.

Regina and I work for an organization which researches Hispanic issues and is interested in discovering ways in which the lives of Hispanics in America can be improved. We are doing some research right now on Hispanic teenage mothers and we'd like to get your input and opinions to help us understand some things. I'll tell you more about what we'll be doing as we go along.

Please feel free to say whatever is on your mind pertaining to the subject matter being discussed. I want to know what you're thinking. And please be assured that what you say will have no effect on the services you are now receiving. I am from Washington and do not work for (organization). Although this organization has helped us coordinate the project locally, a national organization has actually sponsored the project. Whatever is said in this room will not be reported back to anyone here. Your names will not be used and you will not be identified with the remarks you make. Regina and I will be the only ones listening to the tapes. Your comments, along with others in the country, will be used to help us write a report on Hispanic teenage mothers.

I will only run into problems if you don't say anything, because it's my job to get your ideas. So please participate as much as possible, remembering that everyone in the room should have an equal opportunity to respond. I may interrupt from time to time so that everyone has a chance to respond and so that I can cover the material.

Okay, we are going to be here until _____ am/pm. I promise to finish on time.

Just a few more things before we get started. I will be looking at this discussion guide occasionally to remind myself of the things I'd like to cover (hold up discussion guide). I may also look at my watch to keep track of time. Regina will be taking notes, changing the tapes and taking care of general housekeeping. She will not participate in the discussion. Now, I'd like to go around the table and have each person tell us her name, where she lives and how many children she has.

II. Warm-Up (25 minutes)

If everyone is all set, let's begin. These questions are for everyone, so whoever wants to start can.

1. I do not have children but I can imagine it must get difficult, it must be very time-consuming. How do you manage to balance your time?

2. What sorts of things do you do during the day? Which of these things do you like? Which don't you like?

3. Do you get any help? What kinds of help do you get? How did you find out about them?

III. Discussion (40 minutes)

4. I know some of you have been involved in employment and training, because that's one of the things [Community Coordinator] asked you before this meeting. Could you tell me what kinds of programs you've been in? What were they like?

5. I know that some of you are in school and some of you aren't, because that's one of the things [Community Coordinator] asked you earlier. Why have you either stayed in or not stayed in?

6. **(AFDC Group)**

   I know that all of you are involved in the AFDC program. Could you tell me what it's like? How do you feel about it? If you could change anything about the AFDC program, what would it be?

6. **(Non-AFDC Group)**

   I know that some women like yourself use the AFDC program. What do you think about using it? Why? Have you ever used it? Why did you stop receiving AFDC?

7. How do you feel about working? What kind of work is there available, if you were to look for a job right now? What stops you from working?

8. There's a new program I have some information about (reads description of FSA). Have you ever heard of it? What do you think about it? How is it different than what you use now? What problems do you have with this? What else do you want to know?

9. What do you think the future holds for you? Where do you see yourself going?

10. What you would most like to do if you could?

11. How do you see this happening? What would be necessary for this to happen?

IV. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

Okay, thank you again for coming. I hope you all enjoyed this. I thought the session went very well and your responses will be very helpful in writing our report. As discussed earlier, Regina has some envelopes to give you. If you have any other questions, please contact _____ .

APPENDIX E: FIRST-YEAR BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

The following information was collected by the Community Coordinators after a woman had agreed to participate in the study.

1. Name
2. Address
3. Phone
4. # of children and ages
5. Has this person ever participated in a training program? Please describe.
6. Will this person be able to participate in a focus group conducted in English?
7. Is this person: Single; Married; Divorced; Separated; Other (describe)
8. Is this person in school? If yes, level and grade; if no, highest grade completed and reason for leaving.
9. Does this person receive AFDC benefits? If so, for how long has this person been receiving AFDC benefits? During this period has this person stopped receiving AFDC for any length of time? How long and why?

END NOTES

1. See "Appendix C: An Overview of FSA."

2. Focus group discussions are a form of qualitative research in which participants discuss attitudes and opinions about certain predetermined topics. Participants are non-randomly selected. Groups generally consist of 8 to 10 participants who receive a stipend for their time. Discussions usually last about 2 hours. A moderator leads the discussion using a set of questions called a "discussion guide." The discussion guide questions should be flexible enough to allow discussions to evolve, but structured enough to ensure that necessary topics are covered. The moderator uses neutral questioning techniques that challenge participants' thinking without indicating a correct or favored response. Focus group research is generally not longitudinal.

3. NCLR is an organization dedicated to serving all Hispanic Americans. To the extent that data sources permit, NCLR conducts research which disaggregates information for each Hispanic subgroup. In this case, one subgroup was selected for study because resources did not permit a comparative study of different subgroups.

4. The National Puerto Rican Coalition (NPRC) has completed the first year of its focus group study; NPRC expects to release *Implementing the Family Support Act: Perspectives of Puerto Rican Clients*, a report on its first-year findings, in December 1990. The National Urban League is also conducting a focus group study of African Americans; a report on their first-year findings will be released in December 1990.

5. FSA instructs states to spend at least 55% of their allocated JOBS funds on certain target populations. One of the target groups is custodial parents under 24 who have (a) not completed high school or enrolled in high school or equivalent courses, and (b) had little or no work experience in the preceding year. For further information, see "Appendix C: An Overview of FSA."

6. Focus group participants were recruited by Community Coordinators. Community Coordinators received a detailed recruitment guide developed by NCLR. Community Coordinators also received substantial over-the-phone technical assistance from NCLR staff.

   The recruitment guide described the following steps:

   1) Community Coordinator identification of recruitment sources. Community Coordinators identified sources for recruiting focus group participants. These sources were:

Phoenix: Valle del Sol's Family Services Center, Phoenix; Chicanos Por La Causa's Via de Amistad teenage pregnancy program, Phoenix

Mora: Robertson High School GRADS program (a school-based teen parent program), Las Vegas (NM); Luna Vocational Technical School, Las Vegas (NM); New Mexico Department of Human Services, Las Vegas (NM); Home Education Livelihood Program, Mora; Mora-Rio Grande Treatment Center, Cleveland (NM)

Pharr: Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation, Pharr

Kansas City: Guadalupe Center's Westside Teenage Pregnancy Program, Kansas City

2) Community Coordinators developed a pool of potential participants. Community Coordinators made informal contact with women in the recruitment pool. Community Coordinators were instructed to:

- Explain that they were involved in a study of people in the community, but not reveal any specific information about the study;
- Ask potential participants their name, age, and whether or not they receive AFDC.

On the basis of these informal contacts, Community Coordinators made lists of potential participants for both the AFDC and non-AFDC groups.

3) Community Coordinators conducted interviews with potential focus group participants. During these interviews, Community Coordinators were to determine if potential participants were:

- Available during the scheduled focus group time;
- Dependable;
- Likely to contribute to the focus group; and
- Proficient in English or Spanish.

4) Community Coordinators invited interviewees to participate. Once the Community Coordinators made the above determination, they requested the following information:

- Name, address, phone number;
- Number of children and ages;
- Employment and training program experience;

- Marital status;
- Educational attainment;
- Length of time on AFDC;
- If AFDC receipt had stopped for any length of time and why; and
- Whether the person would need to participate in a focus group conducted in English or Spanish.

7. Based on the fact that the women not using AFDC were recruited from very low-income areas, and the content of our discussions with them, we believe the responses of the women in the non-AFDC groups do not reflect a different economic situation than those in the AFDC groups.

8. According to one recent study, 19.4% of Mexican American female headed households receive AFDC, although 63.3% of such households are poor. Among comparable Puerto Rican households, 48.3% recieve AFDC and 74.4% are poor. Trevino, Fernando, M., Christine A. Stroup-Benham, and Dorothy B. Trevino, *The Impact of the Feminization of Poverty on Hispanic Households*, IUP/SSRC Committee for Pubic Policy Research on Contemporary Hispanic Issues, The Center for Mexican American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1990.

9. We do not have complete information on the extent of participants' work experience. This information will be gathered in the second year.

10. This description is based on wording developed by LaScola Qualitative Research, Washington, D.C.

11. See Section VI for a discussion of the second-year subject areas and modifications.

12. *Money, Income, and Poverty Status in the United States, 1989*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, September 1990.

13. We do not know the proportion of foreign-born focus group participants. This information will be gathered for the second-year focus groups.

14. Miranda, Leticia and Julia Teresa Quiroz, *The Decade of the Hispanic: An Economic Retrospective*, National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C., March 1990. This proportion of the Mexican American population that is foreign-born is expected to be revised based on the 1990 Census; however, such information will not be available until 1991.

15. Duany, Luis and Karen Pittman, *Latino Youths at a Crossroads*, Children's Defense Fund, Washington, D.C., January/March 1990.

16. For a more detailed description of state programs, see "Appendix A: Community Profiles."

17. See "Appendix B: Participant Profile."

18. Most of the women in the Mora non-AFDC group were recruited from a school-based teen parent program in Las Vegas, a larger nearby city. The women from the Mora AFDC group were not involved in such a program and were all from the town of Mora.

19. All the married women participants were not using AFDC.

20. A teen mother living at home may be ineligible for AFDC assistance even when her parents are quite poor. This is because federal law treats much of the parents' income as if it were the teen's. Federal rules say that states must count all the "senior" parents' income as available to the "minor" parent, except for (1) the first $75 of earned income; (2) the amount the state has defined as at or below the "standard of need" for the senior parents and their dependents; and (3) amounts paid by the senior parent for alimony, child support, or for the support of a dependent who does not live at home.

    For example, in New Mexico, a teen parent may be ineligible for AFDC if her parent is employed in a minimum wage job. The following scenario illustrates this point:

    > *In 1989, Rosa lived with her father, had a baby, and applied for AFDC for herself and her baby. Her father worked thirty-five hours a week at $3.80 per hour, grossing $572 a month.*
    >
    > *When Rosa applied for AFDC, the state asked for her father's income. Of his gross earnings of $572, the state subtracted $75, bringing his "countable" income to $497. The state then subtracted $210, New Mexico's "standard of need" for a two-person family. The remainder, $287, was counted as income available to Rosa. Because this $287 was higher than New Mexico's standard of need, Rosa was ineligible for AFDC.*

    The purpose of the federal law may be ensure that a child of wealthy or middle class parents does not become eligible for AFDC if she has a baby. However, strict state income counting rules may sometimes prevent young mothers in low-income families from receiving assistance.

21. See end note 37.

22. More than half (57.9%) of the women in this study used relative care. See "Appendix B: Participant Profile."

23. According to unpublished data from the Children's Defense Fund, the proportion of out of wedlock births to Mexican American teens grew from 38% in 1980 to 51% in 1987.

24. We hypothesize that this view of marriage reflects the influence of rural, Mexican American traditional culture. However, this view was not expressed by the women in the Pharr non-AFDC group.

25. This one exception was Kansas City. Here, the community coordinator had participated in a public forum on the state's proposed JOBS implementation. She was highly frustrated by the proposed JOBS plan and felt that the state officials were largely unaware of the possible negative impact of their proposals. "They were shocked at the heat they got at the meeting [with community organizations and AFDC recipients]; even the recipients were criticizing them."

26. See, for example, *How the Poor Would Remedy Poverty*, Coalition on Human Needs, Washington, D.C., 1987.

27. De la Rosa, Denise and Carlyle Maw, *Hispanic Education: A Statistical Portrait*, National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C., October 1990.

28. *Money, Income, and Poverty Status in the United States, 1989*, U.S. Department of the Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC, September 1990.

29. In 1989, more than one fourth (24.6%) of Mexican American women worked in service occupations, compared to less than one fifth of non-Hispanic women (17.1%). In the same year, 20.9% of Mexican American women worked as "operators, fabricators, and laborers," compared to 8.3% of Hispanic women. *The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1989*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, May 1990.

30. Pearce, Diana, *Chutes and Ladders: Playing the Low-Wage Employment Game*, forthcoming.

31. King, Christopher T. and Deanna T. Schexnayder, *Welfare Dynamics in Texas: An Exploratory Analysis of AFDC Turnover and Program Participation*, Center for the Study of Human Resources, University of Texas at Austin, March 1988.

32. See discussion of aspirations and expectations on page 7.

33. Romero, Fred and Judith Gonzales, *Falling Through the Cracks: Hispanic Underrepresentation in the Job Training Partnership Act*, National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C., February 1989.

34. *Ibid*. See also: Melendez, Edwin, "Towards A Good Job Strategy for Latino Workers," *Journal of Hispanic Policy*, Volume 4, 1989-1990.

35. *Hispanic Education: A Statistical Portrait*, *op.cit.*

36. *Immigration Reform: Employer Sanctions and the Question of Discrimination*, U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C., March 1990. See also: Verdugo, Naomi, *The Effects of Discrimination on the Earnings of Hispanic Workers*, National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C., 1982; James, Franklin, *Economic Progress Among Native and Foreign-Born Hispanics During the 1970s*, University of Colorado at Denver, June 1985; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Unemployment and Underemployment of Blacks, Hispanics, and Women*, Washington, D.C., November 1982.

37. Both the Spanish-speaking women participated in the Kansas City, non-AFDC focus group. Project staff were not aware that these women spoke only Spanish until they arrived for the focus group. Because the group also included monolingual English speakers, the moderator spoke to each participant in her preferred language, and attempted to translate from one language to another so that all participants could follow the conversation. The fact that the moderator had not received advance notice and was providing a spontaneous translation of the discussion guide may have influenced the content of the discussion with the Spanish-speaking women.

    The low number of Spanish speakers may have resulted from: (1) recruitment of young women; and (2) confusion in the recruitment process resulting from a question designed to alert the project staff that the focus group would need to be conducted in Spanish. With regard to recruitment of young women, the young age of the focus group participants meant that they were more likely to speak English than older women. Community Coordinators estimate that approximately 10-30% of the young Hispanic mothers in their communities are monolingual Spanish speakers. With regard to the recruitment process, the fact that the pre-focus group questionnaires asked if the participant could speak English may have suggested to recruiters that English speakers were preferred. (See end note 6 for a description of the recruitment process.)

38. Also, in the discussion of the reason for focus group participants' unmarried status, these two women described physical abuse suffered from their male partners. No other focus group participants specifically discussed such abuse.

39. See, for example: Quiroz, Julia Teresa, *Hispanic Poverty: How Much Does Immigration Explain?*, National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C., April 1990.

40. See end not 48.

41. *Who's Minding the Kids?*, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., July 1990.

42. Nightingale, Demetra Smith, and Lynn C. Burbridge, Douglas Wissoker, Lee Bawden, Freya L. Sonenstein, Neal Jeffries, *Experiences of Massachusetts ET Jobs Finders: Preliminary Findings*, The Urban Institute, October 1989.

43. Duany, Luis A., "Puerto Rican Welfare Recipients in New York City: Effective Service-Delivery to Those Most in Need," *The Journal of Hispanic Policy*, Volume 5, 1991.

44. Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics -- a sample which included a very small proportion of Hispanics -- Bane and Ellwood found that getting married is the primary reason women leave welfare. See: Ellwood, David, *Targeting "Would-Be" Long-Term Recipients of AFDC*, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., January 1986.

45. See "Appendix C: An Overview of the Family Support Act."

46. Porter, Kathryn H., *Making JOBS Work: What the Research Says About Effective Employment Programs for AFDC Recipients*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, D.C., March 1990.

47. Gordon, Anne and John Burghardt, *The Minority Female Single Parent Demonstration: Short-Term Economic Impacts*, The Rockefeller Foundation, New York, New York, March 1990.

48. According to Melendez, Edwin, "Towards a Good Job Strategy for Latino Workers," *op.cit.*:

> *Community economic development organizations can create good jobs directly and provide employment opportunities in communities with large members of the working poor. E & T programs can lower the starting cost for new community development ventures or help ensure the continuation of existing ones by training new staff or providing new skills to current staff. Jobs in these organizations tend to stay in the community and represent an important avenue to gaining work experience for many.*

49. *Initial State Evaluation for JOBS*, Arizona Department of Economic Security, October 1989.

50. Unpublished data from Data Network Services, Phoenix, Arizona, 1985.

51. Unpublished data from Phoenix South Mental Health Center, Phoenix, Arizona, 1980.

52. See "Appendix C: An Overview of FSA."

53. *JOBS and Supportive Services State Plan*, Arizona Department of Economic Security, 1990.

54. *Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee*

on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, Washington, D.C., March 1989.

55. *Youth Opportunities Unlimited Proposal*, New Mexico Department of Labor, February 21, 1990.

56. Unpublished data from the New Mexico Department of Labor, 1990.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Youth Opportunities Unlimited Proposal*, New Mexico Department of Labor, *op. cit.*

59. Unpublished data from the New Mexico Department of Labor, 1990.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Sales and Marketing Management Magazine*, page C-113, August 1990.

62. *JOBS Program and Supportive Services Plan*, State of New Mexico Human Services Department Employment Assistance Program, 1989.

63. *Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, op. cit.*

64. *Community Profile of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas*, Rio Grande Valley Chamber of Commerce, Weslaco, Texas, 1989.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Primary Health Care Program Continuation Application for FY 1991, Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation, Pharr. Texas, August 1990.*

67. *Hidalgo-Willacy Consortium SDA Planning Information*, Texas Employment Commission, 1988.

68. From a report by Frank Vasquez, Executive Director of Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation to the Conference on Health and Mental Health Issues on the U.S.-Mexico Border, El Paso, Texas, September 11, 1990.

69. *Primary Health Care Program Continuation Application for FY 1991*, Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation, Pharr, Texas, August 1990.

70. *Sales and Marketing Management Magazine*, page C-163, August 1990.

71. *The BCRR Report for January - December 1989*, Hidalgo County Health Care Corporation, Pharr, Texas, February 1990.

72. *Quarterly Public Assistance Statistics*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C., 1989.

73. *Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program Plan*, Texas Department of Human Services, 1990.

74. *Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means*, *op. cit.*

75. Unpublished data from U.S. Bureau of Census, 1988.

76. Stein, Shifra, *Kansas City: A Unique Guide to the Metro Area*, 1986.

77. Unpublished data from the Mid-America Regional Council Research Data Center, Kansas City, Missouri, 1989.

78. Unpublished data from the Guadalupe Center, Incorporated, Kansas City, Missouri, 1990.

79. Unpublished data from the Guadalupe Center Incorporated, *op. cit.*

80. *JOBS and Support Services State Plan*, Missouri Department of Social Services, 1990.

81. *Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means*, *op. cit.*

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